

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9671
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 00603

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PDEV,UNSC, ET, SO, US
SUBJECT: HORN OF AFRICA: COMMENTS OF FORMER ETHIOPIAN
- AMBASSADOR AYALEW MANDEFRO

SUMMARY: FORMER ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR AYALEW MANDEFRO
FEBRUARY 15 TOLD POLCOUNS HE GENERALLY SUPPORTED OUR
PROPOSALS FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE HORN PROBLEM. HE CRITI-
CIZED THE TIMING OF OUR INITIATIVE BECAUSE IT APPEARS TO
HAVE COME ONLY AFTER THE ETHIOPIANS ADVANCED IN COUNTER-
ATTACK. HE ALSO QUESTIONED THE PRACTICAL FEASIBILITY OF
OUR SUGGESTION FOR SELF-DETERMINATION BY THE OGADEN PEOPLE
AND SEMI-AUTONOMY FOR THE AREA. HE SCOFFED AT FEARS THAT
ETHIOPIA WOULD INVADE SOMALIA TO A POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT
EXTENT. END SUMMARY.

1. RECENTLY RESIGNED ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON
AYALEW MANDEFRO CALLED ON POLCOUNS FEBRUARY 15 AT FORMER'S
REQUEST TO EXPLAIN HIS RESIGNATION AS AMBASSADOR AND RE-
QUEST ASSISTANCE IN FINDING A JOB. AYALEW SEEMED TO BE
FULLY INFORMED CONCERNING US INTEREST IN TAKING THE PROB-
LEM OF THE HORN OF AFRICA TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND
FAMILIAR WITH THE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF A SOLUTION WHICH WE
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ARE CONSIDERING.

2. AYALEW SAID HE STRONGLY APPROVED OF THE GENERAL STANCE
THAT THE US IS RECOMMENDING, EXCEPT FOR THE NOTION OF SELF-
DETERMINATION OR SEMI-AUTONOMY FOR THE OGADEN. AYALEW SAID,
HOWEVER, HIS MAIN QUESTION ABOUT OUR POSSIBLE INITIATIVE
RELATES TO ITS TIMING. IN HIS VIEW OUR INITIATIVE WILL

GAIN NO CREDIBILITY WITH THE MENGISTU GOVERNMENT AND WILL DISILLUSION MANY ETHIOPIANS COUNTING ON ULTIMATE AMERICAN SUPPORT BECAUSE WE APPEAR TO BE ACTING WITH AN ANTI-SOVIET MOTIVATION. IF THE US HAD ACTED EARLIER WHEN ETHIOPIAN FORCES WERE ON THE DEFENSIVE RATHER THAN NOW WHEN THEY ARE MOVING FORWARD, WE MIGHT HAVE GAINED MORE CREDIBILITY.

3. AYALEW ALSO EXPRESSED APPROVAL OF OUR DISPATCH OF A SPECIAL EMISSARY TO ADDIS ABABA. HE SAID IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE US TO MAINTAIN LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH ADDIS FOR LONGER-TERM PURPOSES. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT MENGISTU'S RESPONSE WOULD BE TO OUR HIGH-LEVEL APPROACH BECAUSE TEMPERS ARE HOT WITHIN THE REGIME AT THE MOMENT. MENGISTU'S RECENT INTEMPERATE PUBLIC STATEMENTS REFLECTED THE RISE IN INFLUENCE OF MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS WITHIN THE REGIME -- WHICH WAS THE BASIC CAUSE FOR AYALEW'S OWN DECISION TO RESIGN.

4. WHILE AYALEW APPROVED OF OUR CALL FOR A CEASEFIRE AND WITHDRAWAL OF SOMALI FORCES FROM THE OGADEN IN PRINCIPLE, HE BELIEVED THAT AS A PRACTICAL MATTER THE QUESTIONS OF CEASEFIRE AND WITHDRAWAL ARE APT TO BE RESOLVED ON THE GROUND IN A MATTER OF DAYS BECAUSE OF ETHIOPIAN MILITARY ADVANCES. HE ESTIMATED THAT, WHILE REESTABLISHING STABLE ETHIOPIAN MILITARY CONTROL OF SOME OF THE SOUTHERN OGADEN STRONG POINTS (E.G.,GODE) MIGHT TAKE SOME TIME TO ORGAN-
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IZE, ETHIOPIAN CONTROL IN THE NORTH AROUND JIGJIGGA, HARAR, AND DIREDAWA, WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN A SHORT TIME.

5. AYALEW SCOFFED AT FEARS THAT THE ETHIOPIANS WOULD DRIVE ACROSS THE SOMALI BORDER TO ANY EXTENT THAT WOULD BE POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT. WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT FOR TACTICAL PURPOSES OF HOT PURSUIT OR DESTRUCTION OF RETREATING SOMALI FORCES ETHIOPIAN TROOPS MAY BE SEEN TO CROSS THE BORDER, HE WAS COMPLETELY SURE THAT THERE IS NO INTENTION TO DRIVE THE SOMALIS TO THE SEA, OCCUPY NORTHERN SOMALIA OR TOPPLE SIAD BY MILITARY MEANS. FOR ETHIOPIA TO COMMIT COUNTER-AGGRESSION AGAINST SOMALIA WOULD VITIATE THE LONG-STANDING ETHIOPIAN POSITION REJECTING ANY DESIRE FOR TERRITORIAL EXPANSION. IT ALSO WOULD SUBSTANTIATE THE TRADITIONAL SOMALI CLAIM CONCERNING ETHIOPIA'S "COLONIAL" INCLINATIONS, WHICH ETHIOPIA HAS BEEN AT PAINS TO AVOID IN ALL OF THEIR DEALING WITH SOMALIA.

6. CONCERNING SUGGESTIONS OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE OGADENI PEOPLE AND SEMI-AUTONOMY FOR THE AREA, AYALEW SAID HE DID NOT THINK IT WAS A PRACTICABLE SOLUTION. HE RECOUNTED THE FLUCTUATING PATTERNS OF SEASONAL NOMADIC FLOW IN

AND OUT OF THE OGADEN, NOW INVOLVING MORE THAN FOUR-HUNDRED THOUSAND SOMALI PEOPLE. HE RECOUNTED AT LENGTH PREVIOUS EFFORTS BY THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT, EXTENDING BACK TO THE EARLY '70S, TO NEGOTIATE AGREEMENTS WITH THE SIAD GOVERNMENT ON ADJUSTMENT OF THE OGADEN BORDER AND COOPERATION IN DEALING WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NOMADIC POPULATION FLOW. HE CONCLUDED THAT THESE EFFORTS FOUNDERED BASICALLY BECAUSE OF SIAD'S REJECTION OF COOPERATION WITH ETHIOPIA. ON THE BORDER QUESTIONS, THE SOMALIS WERE NOT INTERESTED IN EFFORTS TOWARD MINOR RATIONALIZATION OF THE

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INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 00603

CURRENT BORDERS AND INSTEAD INSISTED ON RETAINING THEIR CLAIM TO BROAD AREAS OF ETHIOPIA BEYOND THE OGADEN. ON PROBLEMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF NOMADIC SOMALI'S, SIAD REJECTED COOPERATION BECAUSE IT WOULD DILUTE HIS CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY OVER ETHNIC SOMALI PEOPLE WHEREVER THEY MAY TRAVEL. YOUNG

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